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ARGENTINA PROJECT 0000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE
Margaret P. Graf

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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Buenos Aires

July 11, 1983

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Human Rights Organization Leaders
(see attached list)

DATE/PLACE : July 7, 1983, Ambassador's Residence

SUBJECT : Human Rights in Argentina

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The guests were more or less in agreement on the following:

- They remain firmly opposed to any amnesty.
- They continue to want investigations and trials of those responsible for killings, disappearances, and torture.
- They believe that most politicians recognize that an accounting for what occurred during the so-called "dirty war" must take place.
- They believe that whereas the issue of human rights was an obstacle to elections and a return to democracy a year ago, it no longer is.
- They believe that the issue of human rights can be a unifying force in Argentine society, and cite the support that Congressional candidate Conte is receiving from people who are not of his party (Christian Democrats), such as Bravo (who is a Socialist), as well as from people who are apolitical (students, etc.)
- They believe that now is the time to make Argentina a democracy with the military subordinate to civilians, and, if they cannot do it now, when the military are the weakest and the most discredited they have been in decades, then Argentina will never be a democracy.

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-- If an amnesty law is announced by the military, the human rights leaders will try to have it repealed by the new Congress next year (although Mignone told the Ambassador in May that Mignone did not believe they would be successful in seeking repeal).

-- They believe that the next six months will be tumultuous.

-- They believe that a new Argentina is emerging, and cite as proof the fact that in the internal political party elections to date, several old war horses have been defeated by younger leaders.

-- They believe that Spain is not a relevant model for Argentina since the circumstances here are so different (primarily the absence of a king and the shortness of time since the "dirty war").

COMMENT: We think that the human rights leaders overestimate both the strength of their movement within Argentina and the willingness of the military to accept trials and punishment for actions during the war against subversion. Nevertheless, the firmly-held beliefs of the human rights leaders (some of whom saw their children disappear during the "dirty war"), and their willingness to act on those beliefs, are important factors to be watched as Argentina tries to struggle through its transition to democracy. We also note that of these four leading human rights leaders, three are now very active politically: Conte is an announced candidate for Congress; Mignone appears to be considering his possibilities (he is a Peronist); and Bravo is a Socialist who the day before this luncheon lead a strike of teachers that got about 3,500 people in the streets of Buenos Aires, was 95 percent successful in Buenos Aires, and 100 percent successful in the provinces.

Drafted by: POL:JAA11itto:jmr *Jan*

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